

DRAFT - 11/3/78
B. Palmer

MANUEL RAY RIVERO

When he first came into prominence as a Cuban exile leader, Manuel Ray Rivero was described as "softspoken and unassuming", a person of "highest intellect, sincerity and conviction" -- in other words, a natural leader.¹ In 1947, the 23-year old Ray was granted a scholarship by the Cuban Ministry of Public Works to study civil engineering at the University of Utah.² Ray was in the United States for two years before returning to his native Cuba in 1949 and obtaining various positions in the engineering field, one of which was project manager for the construction of the Havana Hilton Hotel.³

Reacting to the excesses of the military rule of Fulgencio Batista, Ray organized the Civic Resistance Movement in 1957 and began supervising sabotage and acts of terrorism against the government.⁴ His political posture and active resistance to Batista was recognized by Fidel Castro who, upon assuming control of the government of Cuba, appointed Ray his Minister of Public Works in February 1959.⁵ Within a few months of his appointment, Ray confided to two anti-Castro Cubans that he had recognized the symptoms of Communism in the Castro regime but was not prepared to conspire against "El Lider Maximo."⁶

Ray's tenure in Castro's government was short-lived. He was relieved of his official position in November 1959.⁷ No

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definite reason for this severance has been documented but, according to one source, Ray did not leave Castro because of ideological or policy discrepancies but rather because of a personality clash with Castro's Minister of Labor who almost shot Ray after a stormy Cabinet meeting.⁸ Another theory about his leaving was that he opposed Castro's plan to declare Hubert Matos a traitor and execute the Cuban revolutionary hero with whom Ray had been associated.⁹

For whatever reason, Ray did continue to permit his name to be associated with the Castro regime¹⁰ until May 1960 when he formed the Revolutionary Movement of the People (MRP).¹¹

The MRP was^{an} anti-Castro organization which believed that the ideas and aims of the democratic left best suited the needs and aspirations of the Cuban people.¹² It did not wish to reinstate the 1940 Cuban Constitution, rather it favored continuation of the laws passed by Castro at the beginning of his regime¹³ and advocated the regulation of private investment and nationalization of all utilities.¹⁴ Associated with Ray in this underground organization were Raul Chibas, Ramon Barquin, Rogelio Cisneros,¹⁵ Rufo Lopez Fresquet and Felipe Pazos.¹⁶

Organized in each of Cuba's six provinces, the MRP was considered the most important underground group.¹⁷ Working in tightly organized cells, the leadership in one province was unaware of the identities of their counterparts in other

in other provinces.¹⁸ The MDC engaged in acts of sabotage and was supplied with explosives sent by launches from the Florida Keys.¹⁹

Having waited until May, 1960 to organize his resistance group, Ray was criticized as being suspiciously tardy to the anti-Castro movement.²⁰ Charges of "Fidelism without Fidel" were made against him and the MRP because of their leftist ideologies.²¹ Perhaps for these reasons, Ray's background was questioned by some in the State Department²² and the Miami CIA station²³ when, in the summer of 1960, he was being recruited by the CIA in Cuba to become a member of the Frente Revolucionario Democrático (FRD), a newly formed anti-Castro organization sponsored by the CIA.²⁴ The Agency considered him an important political asset²⁵ and facilitated his clandestine entrance into the United States²⁶ on November 10, 1960.²⁷

Nevertheless, there was internal conflict within the CIA about Ray's political compatibility to United States government policy. In a CIA Memo for Record, dated November 21, 1960, one Agency officer declared, "... Ray did not politically represent anything to cheer about."²⁸ A CIA officer who met privately with Ray in November, 1960 noted that his political posture was "doubtful" as far as U. S. government acceptance was concerned,²⁹ and a further assessment portrayed Ray as so far "left in his thinking that he would be as dangerous to U. S. interests as Castro."³⁰

Some prominent Cuban emigres also expressed negative opinions about Ray, among them Dr. Jose Miro Cardona, president of the FRD. Miro opposed Ray because he considered his program too Marxist³¹ and declared that Ray was bitterly anti-American as well as probably totalitarian in his thinking.³² Manuel Artime, head of the Movimiento Recuperacion Revolucionaria (MRR), noted that Ray's group was opposed to banning the Communist Party and in favor of "nationalizing everything."³³ Although aware of his controversial political philosophy, the CIA continued to actively recruit Ray to join the FRD³⁴ because the White House and State Department pushed for his inclusion.³⁵

Ray received [full operational approval as a "political asset"] on February 7, 1961³⁶ but resisted joining the newly formed Cuban Revolutionary Council (CRC) just as he had resisted inclusion into the FRD. He said he felt the members of the CRC were too restrained and he did not want to become a part of a situation in which someone else was running the show for the exiles.³⁷ However, three weeks before the Bay of Pigs invasion, Ray was persuaded to join the CRC as a show of unity.³⁸

In recalling the events of this period, Ray told HSCA investigators that he was aware of the fact that certain influential and wealthy Americans, among them former Ambassador William Pawley, were opposed to him and that a lot of heavy propaganda was being circulated accusing him of being a Communist. 39

Ray withdrew from the CRC shortly after the Bay of Pigs invasion. In a Miami news conference on May 28, 1961, he said the major reason for the MRP break with the CRC was that the Council had failed to live up to the written promises given it in March, outlining conditions Ray had insisted upon before joining the organization.⁴⁰ The first condition had been that the Council was to give first priority to the underground fighters in Cuba during the Bay of Pigs invasion. Secondly, Ray had insisted that anyone too closely associated with the Batista regime would not be used in the invasion. Also, he said, he was to have been allowed prior approval of any appointment of invasion military leaders.⁴¹ Ray told the assembled newsmen that his program to overthrow Castro was based on maximum mobilization of the discontented people inside Cuba, and that he thought the leadership of this underground should come from Cubans who could prove they had access to such a potential force.⁴²

Ray sought CIA support for the MRP independent of the Council,⁴³ claiming that the group had an effective underground organization but needed material and financial support.⁴⁴ Ray felt the MRP had to be allowed to plan its own operations and broaden its base of financial support to include sympathetic Latin American governments.⁴⁵ He was totally opposed to another large invasion attempt.⁴⁶

The Miami CIA station recommended Ray be given an initial \$50,000 for operational expenses.⁴⁷ Reaction at CIA headquarters was immediate: Within 24 hours a Memo for the Record was circulated, objecting to the Miami Station's recommendation and claiming that Ray did not ever produce any substantial military actions against Castro.⁴⁸ Ray was told to submit a "prospectus" of his plans for the MRP and advised that no financial help would be forthcoming until such a plan was reviewed.⁴⁹

Ray went to Puerto Rico about July, 1961, where he received sympathetic support for the MRP from the Governor of that island, Luis Munoz Marin, who personally liked Ray.⁵⁰ While Ray was in Puerto Rico, a member of the MRP underground in Cuba reported to the MRP Executive Council that he had been in contact with the CIA and was told by the Agency that no material resources would be available for the group until Manuel Ray was dismissed as general coordinator.⁵¹ Charging the CIA with repeated interference in the affairs of the MRP, Ray resigned so that there wouldn't be any obstacle to the group's cohesion.⁵²

In October, 1961, the Puerto Rican Planning Board announced that Ray had accepted a \$12,000-a-year position as consultant to that Board.⁵³ Although there was no evidence that the Puerto Rican government was supporting the MRP, Ray was looked upon with great favor by Puerto Rican officials⁵⁴ and he endeavored to rebuild the MRP with Cuban exiles residing there.⁵⁵

Although reinstated into the national leadership of the MRP in April, 1962,⁵⁶ Ray began formulating plans for a new anti-Castro organization, Junta Revolucionario Cubana (JURE)⁵⁷ which, he said, would be only political in nature.⁵⁸ Ray freely admitted that this group, organized in July, 1962⁵⁹ would cooperate with the CRC but ultimately hoped to dominate it.⁶⁰

Concurrent with his JURE activities, Ray began giving information to the CIA regarding possible recruitment or defection of Castro officials.⁶¹ Specifically, he discussed plans with the CIA to approach the Cuban Ambassador to Mexico.⁶² The CIA, deciding he had such capabilities, recommended he be given \$84,000 over a six-month period to set up an intelligence network inside Cuba and create a recruitment or defection capability in selected Latin American countries.⁶³ The degree of Ray's success in this area is not documented, but his efforts continued into the summer of 1963 and involved recruitment activities in France and Belgium.⁶⁴ [The Chief of Station in Paris] was so impressed by Ray's abilities that he recommended he be used more extensively in this capacity.⁶⁵

In June, 1963, the CIA inaugurated the concept of "Autonomous Operations", under which JURE could be financed independently, not through the CRC.⁶⁶ Military operations were also initiated⁶⁷ with Rogelio Cisneros as JURE military coordinator.⁶⁸

Under his interpretation of the "Rules of Engagement of the Autonomous Operations", Cisneros felt that JURE was not obligated to report its military or political plans to the CIA but that the Agency was obligated to finance JURE's purchase of military equipment.⁶⁹

By the fall of 1963, Ray was devoting his full time to JURE,⁷⁰ traveling extensively in Latin American countries to gain support which would allow JURE to mount resistance operations inside Cuba.⁷¹ Ray told this Committee that he and Cisneros were in Caracas for this purpose on November 22, 1963. He remembers that the assistant to the President of Venezuela came into the JURE meeting shortly after lunch that day and announced that President Kennedy had been shot.⁷²

In January, 1964, Ray's organization was making plans to move their operations to Costa Rica⁷³ and, at the same time, establish a guerrilla training base in Venezuela.⁷⁴ He also began to formulate plans for his own infiltration into Cuba⁷⁵ declaring that he would turn the operation of JURE over to Rogelio Cisneros during his absence.⁷⁶

Ray's plan was delayed until May, at which time he quit his job in Puerto Rico and dropped out of sight.⁷⁷ His infiltration plans were known throughout the Miami Cuban exile community.⁷⁸ Soon the story spread to Cuba where Castro ordered a full-scale military alert and rounded up scores of suspected Ray supporters.⁷⁹

After several days of bad weather and dodging Cuban patrol boats, Ray and his crew of seven,⁸⁰ including a reporter-photographer team from LIFE magazine,⁸¹ landed at the Anguilla Cays, 40 miles off the Cuban coast.⁸² There Ray intended to make a final equipment check and a final radio transmission.⁸³

Because of their proximity to Cuba, the Anguilla Cays were heavily patrolled by Castro forces and by the British who owned them.⁸⁴ The British discovered Ray and his group and their cache of weapons and explosives, arrested them for illegal entry into the Bahamas and took them to Nassau.⁸⁵ The minimal fine of \$14 was levied on each member of the group and each was admonished to never trespass again.⁸⁶

Upon his release, Ray said that he was as determined as ever to infiltrate Cuba: "Fidel knows me," he said, "and he knows I'm coming."⁸⁷

Compounding Ray's problems was the revelation by the FBI and U.S. Treasury that Rogelio Cisneros had illegally purchased \$50,000 worth of arms for JURE from a California arms manufacturer.^{82 89} It also caused the CIA considerable embarrassment.^{82 89} The Agency denied knowledge of the purchase to Revenue officials and, because of the autonomous nature of its relationship with JURE, did not make any attempt to stop Revenue's investigation.^{82 90} The Agency now, however, told Ray that he would have to move all his operations outside U. S. territory.^{82 91}

In order to shore up his waning credibility within the Cuban exile community, Ray again tried to infiltrate Cuba in July, 1964 but, again, his boat developed motor trouble and the plan was aborted.^{84 92} The failure this time led three exile groups to withdraw from JURE.^{93 85}

All these events, from May through July, resulted in a CIA decision to stop financing Ray until he ceased all activities from the U.S. mainland.^{94 86} The Agency authorized a final payment of \$75,000 to the group to facilitate the move,^{87 95} thereby "closing the books" on JURE.^{88 96}

Ray kept his organization together until August, 1968^{89 97} although it was relatively ineffective. He personally maintained an interest in anti-Castro activities. In 1969, he

called together a congress of Cuban exiles to create a new organization.⁹⁸ As late as 1972, he was actively engaged in the formulation of the People's Revolutionary Party, hoping to reinvigorate the anti-Castro movement,^{99, 91} but it, too, failed to make an impact.^{92, 100}

Ray still resides in Puerto Rico and heads his own engineering consulting firm in San Juan.^{93, 101}

FOOTNOTES

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94. CIA/DDO, Ray Volume XV, Memo for Record, 6/29/64 from Alfonso Rodriguez, Subject: Establishment of Base Abroad, Manuel Ray Rivero

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